

Initial Reactions: Disinformation in the 2020 Elections

TUE, NOVEMBER 10, 2020 • 11:00 AM ET

Leaders of the Election Integrity Partnership discuss the mis- and disinformation they saw on election day and how the partnership is fighting against election-related disinformation.

As the global community continues to grapple with the coronavirus (COVID-19), the Atlantic Council is open for business. Our business, meetings, and events, however, are occurring virtually. For more information, please [read an update](#) from our President and CEO.

What happened: Disinformation in 2020 elections



EXHIBIT
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Disinformation was a central vulnerability throughout 2020 U.S. elections.

A coalition of premier research institutions came together in the Election Integrity Partnership to detect and mitigate disinformation focused on the election, in particular attempts to delegitimize the voting process and election results.

The Partnership conducted monitoring, including 24/7 during the week of the election, of the information space. It also worked to directly support information exchange between state and local election officials, federal government agencies, social media platforms, civil society organizations, and media. Working together, the Partnership was committed to nonpartisan analysis and building resilience against disinformation — and other online harms — in the 2020 US presidential election.

Please join us on Tuesday, November 10 at 11 AM EST for a critical discussion with representatives from each of the organizations included in the Election Integrity Partnership: the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, the Stanford Internet Observatory, Graphika, and the University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public.

While the Partnership will be publishing a comprehensive report of analysis and findings encapsulating the entirety of our effort in the coming months, this discussion is meant to provide insight into initial, expert reactions and lessons learned on disinformation's role in American democracy and what to expect going forward...just as soon as the experts have benefited from a full night of sleep.

The [Election Integrity Partnership](#) is a coalition of premier research teams focused on supporting real-time monitoring and information exchange between the research community, election officials, government agencies, civil society organizations, and social media platforms. The Partnership, made up of the Atlantic Council's [Digital Forensic Research](#)

Lab (DFRLab), the Stanford Internet Observatory, Graphika, and the University of Washington Center for an Informed Public, was created to detect and mitigate the impact of election and voting related misinformation.



Speakers

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The Election Integrity Partnership coalition

Stanford | Internet Observatory
Cyber Policy Center

Graphika

 **DFRLab**

W CENTER FOR AN INFORMED PUBLIC
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

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AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

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IN RE: STATE OF MISSOURI, ET AL.

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VS.

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JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR., ET AL.

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CASE NO. 322CV01213

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EVENT: ATLANTIC COUNCIL: INITIAL REACTIONS:

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DISINFORMATION IN THE 2020 ELECTIONS

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NOVEMBER 10, 2020

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15 (Due to the quality of the recorded media, portions
16 were unable to be transcribed and include inaudible
17 portions. The transcript may also include
18 misinterpreted words and/or unidentified speakers.
19 The transcriber was not present at the time of the
20 recording; therefore, this transcript should not be
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23 TRANSCRIBED BY: MELISSA LANE

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1 (CLIP: 22:34-23:25)

2 ALEX STAMOS: You know, an interesting

3 thing is almost all of this is domestic: right? So

4 you know, to pre-empt the question that we've got

5 every single day since election day, there has been

6 some foreign action. There's obviously a lot of overt

7 foreign activity, you know, overt, meaning the, you

8 know, declared media outlets and Twitter accounts and

9 the like of foreign governments. There has been a

10 little bit of covert. We're going to talk about it

11 but nothing that's very interesting. It is all

12 domestic, and the second point on the domestic, a huge

13 part of the problem is well-known influencers, and I

14 think that was a theme that we saw during the entire

15 week is that you have a -- a relatively small number

16 of people with very large followings who have the

17 ability to go and find a narrative somewhere, pick it

18 out of obscurity and harden -- you know, some kind of

19 a little idea, one tweet, one photo, one video and

20 then to harden it into these narratives.

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AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

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1 (CLIP: 49:34-49:50)
2 ALEX STAMOS: So, you know, on effectively
3 pushing the platforms to do stuff. So, yes, there's a
4 basic problem that they will always be more
5 responsive in the places that are both economically
6 highly important and that have huge potential
7 regulatory impact, most notably right now that would
8 be the United States and Europe.

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1 (CLIP: 50:06-50:56)

2 ALEX STAMOS: My suggestion, if people want
3 to get the platforms to do stuff is, first, you've got
4 to push for written policies that are specific and
5 that give you predictability; right? And so this is
6 something we started in the summer, in August, is as
7 Kate talked about Carly Miller led a team from all
8 four institutions to look at the detailed policies
9 of the big platforms and to measure them against
10 situations that we expected to happen.

11 Now we're not going to take credit for all
12 of the changes they made, but there -- we had to
13 update this thing, like, eight or nine times; right?
14 And so like putting these people in a grid to say,
15 you're not handling this, you're not handling this,
16 you're not handling this, creates a lot of pressure
17 inside of the companies and forces them to kind of
18 grapple with these issues, because you want specific
19 policies that you can hold them accountable for. The
20 second is, when you report stuff to them, report how
21 it's violating those written policies; right? So
22 there's two steps here. Get good policies, and then
23 say, this is how it's violated it.

24 (Audio ended.)

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AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

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17 *Melissa J. Lane*

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19 Melissa J. Lane, CCR, CSR, RPR

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